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if you recollect certain traits, you will find most assuredly when you come to compare the drawing with the original, that you recalled it very imperfectly; yet each time that you pass from Nature to the drawing, the image will grow more distinct. For the reproduction of transitory effects in landscape, particularly, this exercise is invaluable, as the fullest aid from sketches is necessarily very slight.

But this one thing ever remember, that before Nature you are to lose sight of yourself, and seek reverently for truth, neither being captious as to what its quality may be, or considering whether your manner of telling it may be the most dextrous and draughtsmanlike. It is not of the least consequence whether you appear in your studies or no—it is of the highest importance that they should be true. You will find, in after times, that the rudest effort to tell a fact in Nature will have a value, which will shame your studied pretinences into the obscurity of rubbish portfolios.

## Letters

### ON LANDSCAPE PAINTING.\*

NO. VIII.

DEAR SIR:—A Landscape with figures, introduced merely for pictorial effect, without enhancing the meaning, may render the picture more beautiful and more artistic, and yet amount to little more than a sort of human cattle piece; and whenever the human figure becomes paramount, and gives to the picture a significance independent of, and superseding the sentiment of the landscape, it is no longer legitimate landscape, and falls under some of the departments of figure subjects. But when the human form exerts an influence in unison with the sentiment of inanimate nature, increasing its significance without supplanting it, the representative character of the landscape is not affected; and whatever imaginative force may attach to the figure itself, the value of representative truth is not lessened. When I asserted, then, in my last letter, that the great landscape is always representative of nature, and that it owes its greatness primarily to this fact, it was on the ground previously assumed, that the true province of Landscape Art is the representation of the work of God in the visible creation, independent of man, or not dependent on human action, further than as an accessory or an auxiliary. From this point of view let us briefly examine the conventional distinctions of Idealism and Realism, together with the action of the imagination in connection with them, and which seems to have given rise to these distinctions.

What then is Idealism? According to the interpretation commonly received, that picture is ideal whose component parts are representative of the utmost perfection of Nature, whether with respect to beauty or other considerations of fitness in the objects

represented, according to their respective kinds, and also the most perfect arrangement or composition of these parts so as to form an equally perfect whole. The extreme of this ideal asserts that this required perfection is not to be found or rarely found in single examples of natural objects, nor in any existing combination of them. In order to compose the ideal picture, then, the artist must know what constitutes the perfection of every object employed, according to its kind, and its circumstances, so as to be able to gather from individuals the collective idea. This view of Idealism does not propose any deviation from the truth, but on the contrary, demands the most rigid adherence to the law of its highest development.

Realism, therefore, if any way distinguishable from Idealism, must consist in the acceptance of ordinary forms and combinations as found. If strictly confined to this, it is, indeed, an inferior grade of Art; but as no one contends that the representation of ordinary or common-place nature is an ultimatum in Art, the term Realism signifies little else than a disciplinary stage of Idealism, according to the interpretation given, and is misapplied when used in opposition to it, for the ideal is, in fact, nothing more than the perfection of the real.

Every step of progress towards truthful representation of Nature will be so much gained of the knowledge indispensable to the attainment of the ideal, for all the generic elements of natural objects, by which one kind is distinguished from another, are the same in the imperfect as in the perfect specimen. The difference lies in the disposition of them; so when you shall have learned all that characterizes the oak as oak, you will be prepared to apply those characteristics according to the requirements of ideal beauty, to the production of the ideal oak. And this process continued through all forms and combinations, defines the creative power of Art, not in producing new things for its special purpose, but in supplying from Nature's general fullness, all particular deficiencies in whatsoever things she has furnished for its use. Thus far the meaning of Idealism is limited to the perfection of beauty with generic character and fitness in combinations. But the ideal of Landscape Art does not end here; it embraces, and with even higher meaning, the application of these perfections to the expression of a particular sentiment in the subject of the picture,—whether it be the representation of the repose and serenity of Nature in quiet and familiar scenes, or of her sterner majesty in the untrodden wilderness, as well as of her passionate action in the whirlwind and storm—each has its own distinctive ideality. In this direction we come to the action of the imaginative faculty, which perfects the high ideal.

In so far as we have arrived at any understanding of the term Idealism and Realism, there does not appear any definite line of distinction between them, or at best, these terms are inexpressive, if intended to describe separate departments of Art power; nor can I discern wherein the imaginative faculty exercises an influence independent of the perfect ideal of representative truth, but only in extending its meaning to the utmost limit, spiritualizing,

as it were, the images of inanimate objects, and appealing through them to the inmost susceptibility of the mind and heart, thus becoming the highest attribute of the great Artist in developing the true ideal. Hence its legitimate action is not seen as creating an imaginary world, as some suppose; but in revealing the deep meaning of the real creation around and within us.

The imagination, like every other element of genius, can only be comprehended in its visible impress on whatsoever things it touches, always identical, but with comparative degrees of power, at times dimly shadowed, at others glowing with impassioned feeling. The faint blush of morning light that calls up the sleeping mists of the valley, may declare its presence as surely as the lurid flash that

"sets on fire  
The heavens with falling thunderbolts."

It is not my purpose, however, to discuss the nature of the imaginative faculty, nor the subtle abstractions of idealism. It is sufficient if we have arrived safely at the conclusion, that all the elements with which the imagination deals, and on which idealism is based, exist visibly in Nature, and are, therefore, not separate creations of Art, my chief object being to guard against the false notion that High Landscape Art disregards all restrictions imposed by the law of truthful representation of nature.

One important inference, at least, is derived from what has been said—that is, if a student who is capable of perceiving and appreciating the beautiful, seldom finds in any given subject selected for study that completeness of individual parts or general arrangement which gives entire satisfaction, and takes on himself the responsibility of changing or omitting objectionable features, with the view to idealize without reference to the principle of ideal beauty, which preserves all characteristic forms inviolate, the chance is, that what is gained in grace will not compensate for the loss of the vigorous expression which it displaces, and that it is better to accept the model as nature has disposed it, without thought of change, until such time as increase of knowledge and mature judgment shall enable him to supply deficiencies without loss of character: for example, to prune the tree, if required, or add an additional branch, as by natural growth, instead of engrafting on it for the sake of beauty in form, offshoots that falsify its particular species.

And further: with motives similar to those which induce the student prematurely to attempt improvements in the model before him, he is often mistakenly impelled to make long journeys in search of the picturesque, in order to gain attention and win applause, when, by the common roadside, and on the banks of familiar streams near home, provident Nature has furnished elements of ideal beauty easily approached, and more than sufficient for the wants of all the incipient stages of study, and when faithfully transcribed, more essentially beautiful, and more certain to win admiration from those whose approbation is desirable, than any abortive display of the grand and striking features of Nature can ever produce. Extensive scenes of wild or other impressive character, as well as rare and extraor-

\* Entered according to Act of Congress.

dinary effects, are not subjects for the young artist, and why should he seek them when the simple and familiar passages above indicated, like the domestic virtues—not only estimable for their intrinsic loveliness but also for the total absence of ostentation,—and being appreciable by all, will be more certain of just and ample reward.

Much has been said by writers on Art as well as artists, in disparagement of what they call *servile imitation* of Nature, as unworthy of genius and degrading to Art, cramping invention, and fettering the imagination, in short, productive only of mere matter-of-fact works. What is meant by servile imitation, so called, is difficult to understand. If its meaning is limited to that view of realism which accepts commonplace forms and appearances, without searching for the ideal of natural beauty, the objections are valid; but if it comprehends the faithful representation of all that is most beautiful and best fitted for the entire purposes of Art, really existing and accessible, and ever waiting to be gathered up by earnest love and untiring labor, then is it an utter fallacy, born of indolence and conceit. With the faculty to perceive and select from the infinite beauty and significance of Nature broadcast throughout her wide domain, surely no artist can reasonably complain for lack of unbounded liberty. Let him take the pains to store his memory with the unlimited *material* thus furnished, and the inventive and imaginative faculties will have enough to do in developing every conceivable result, and in ample measure for the supply of the most insatiable desires of Art.

It appears to me sheer folly to talk about too close imitation of Nature, in any object or appearance eligible and worthy for the highest or humblest purposes of Art, or of too servile reliance on the continuous practical study of them. Nor can we dispense with such study, unless something more worthy can be found to supply its place, and render the study unnecessary. This the free-thinking Art-advocate does not pretend to furnish, but merely demands permission to deviate at pleasure from, or not to be tied down to, literal transcripts. If such transcripts were practicable, which is not the case, the injurious effect of the alleged servility is after all dependent on the capacity of the student, for where the faculties exist to make a right use of all study of Nature, there can be no possible danger, no restriction to the freest exercise; on the other hand, where they do not exist, the fetter, if any be found, will be well applied, and fortunate for Art, if applied to arrest the multiplication of inane compositions and unmeaning details which make up the great majority of landscape pictures everywhere abounding. The supposed evil, then, of this *servile imitation*, is a mere bugbear, and so far as it concerns the unimaginative artist, such a course is his surest safeguard against the repetition and sameness, of whatsoever description, to which he is constantly exposed.

Who has ever seen the glowing sun-light or transparent silvery atmosphere too servilely imitated? The playful surface or thoughtful depth of lucid waters—their rage when swollen by the outpourings of heaven, or lashed into foam by the mighty winds—who has imitated these too servilely? And the like beauty and sublimity of the glorious sky—when shall we see

an imitation too servile of its eternal changefulness? The long processions of the quiet cirri, in their robes of purity skirting the gorgeous thrones of majestic cumuli, and the dark rain-clouds, agitated and convulsed with awful threatnings, like a revolutionary tumult,

“—— with fear of change  
Perplexing monarchs!”

And then, before the agile hand can have traced some record of their brief existence, fading away in filmy light, or losing form in broad mysterious shadows, and again reviving in different forms and combinations, now dim with foreboding gloom, now rivaling the sun in dazzling splendor, with every intermediate gradation and contrast within the range of human perception—can this be imitated at all, much less too servilely!

And in many other constituents of the great picture—according to their purport and consequence—the most beautiful tree of its species—the rock, for its picturesqueness with generic character—wherein is there danger on the score of truthful servility? And finally, why is every distinguished Landscapist noted for constant out-door studiousness,—Claude, according to Vasari, from morning till nightfall at work in the open fields or on the quays, from whence he drew his far-famed sea-ports—Turner, at all hours under the open sky, *washing in* his memoranda of the fitting effects which display his imaginative power and versatile invention! and other diligent students of Nature of like habits. Why should such men be for ever toiling at the great fountain, if the artificial cisterns of the studio were not inadequate to quench their thirst?

Let us away, then, with these false alarms, and be thankful in the assurance that it is by reverent attention to the realized forms of Nature alone, that Art is enabled by its delegated power to reproduce some measure of the profound and elevated emotions which the contemplation of the visible works of God awaken. Could the picture do more by means of whatsoever Art-license or departure from the truth?

Imitation of Nature is indeed servile, and every way unworthy, when it discards the necessity of selection, and indiscriminately accepts all things as of equal value, not only bestowing the same care on the wild thistle of the field as on the rose and on the passion-flower, but without discerning the two-fold commendations of superior beauty and significance, as indicated in the perfume and in the symbolism which invest the latter with higher claims to a place in the Art-conservatory.

Yours truly,

A. B. DURAND.

SALVATOR ROSA.—Although compared with Claude and Gaspar Poussin, he takes but a third place, still his originality is decided, and in some respects great. Himself of a passionate and wild temperament, his Art partakes of the same character. He delights in all that is lonely and fearful in nature; the figures he introduces are those of robbers, soldiers, and mariners, while his broad and bold execution, with a full body of colors, and generally dark masses of shadow, fully corresponds with the subjects. At the same time, he occasionally painted pictures of a cheerful character and delicate finish.—*Dr. Waagen.*

## THE WILDERNESS AND ITS WATERS.\*

### CHAPTER XII.

#### A HOME IN THE WOODS.

As usual, we were stirring the next morning at early light. I would willingly have lain and slept longer, but to sleep was impossible, so I followed the example the others set me, determining, however, to be compensated by a nap in the daytime. It was concluded in council, that we should stay here as long as we could, and when we were compelled to break up here, to make tracks for the settlements. During the remainder of the visit, then, this was to be our home, and a fairer one could not have been found in the wilderness. We were camped in a magnificent grove of forest-trees—pines, beeches, birches, maples, spruces, and the lesser firs, which made a dense canopy over head, and formed grand aisles for wandering, when we felt so disposed. Opposite the camp, the shore was a sloping beach, only a few rods in length however, and terminated at each end by walls of loose boulders, which rose at one extremity into a massive bluff of rock, and at the other, ended in a point. The whole shore was hedged by firs leaning out over the water, leaving here and there a gap, in one of which we had drawn the boats ashore. From the beach, where the boats lay, and outside of this veil of firs, the view was grand. We were near the upper extremity of the lake, and the portion above us was a deep bay, only walled in by unbroken forest, while below us, the islands, and the bold rocky bluffs and cliffs showed the lake winding through them. All around the hills rolled away, round peaks, each like the others, except the one grand old mountain, which rose irregularly, and with one nearly perpendicular face, behind all the others—“purple blue with the distance and vast.” There was not a break in its mantle of foliage, except on the steeper face, near the summit, where the grey rock showed a precipice of considerable altitude, perhaps two or three hundred feet, it was impossible to say, even approximately. It was a huge ledge, and suggested a magnificent out-look, but it was too far off to leave us any hope of thridding the dense forest, and climbing the steep to that altitude. We could only look, and wish for a minute’s standing there. From the summit, to half-way down, the colors of the foliage had begun to change, and it seemed as if the sunlight rested there with extra intensity. The guides said that somebody had been to the top of the mountain, and reported that sixty lakes could be seen from there. Angler calculated that it was more than he cared about seeing at once, and we all concluded that wide views didn’t pay. The fact is, we were getting lazy.

This was the first day in which we had not had a destination—we had nothing to do but cook our meals, and eat them. We dispatched a breakfast of venison, fried and broiled on sticks held before the fire, trout fried, and bread, without potatoes, our stock having been all eaten up. This duty performed, I availed myself of the leisure

\* Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1855, by  
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In the Clerk’s Office of the District Court for the Southern District of  
New York.